



House Bill No. 6668: An Act Concerning Pregnant Women in the Workplace  
Committee on Labor and Public Employees  
Submitted by: Catherine Bailey, Deputy Director, Connecticut Women's Education and Legal  
Fund  
February 16, 2017

The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls, and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives. For 43 years, CWEALF has served as a leading advocate for policies that combat workplace discrimination and improve the financial security of women in Connecticut. CWEALF urges your support for H.B. 6668: *An Act Concerning Pregnant Women in the Workplace*.

If women in the workplace are demoted or fired because of their pregnancy, the financial consequences of losing pay or losing a job are devastating. In addition, when employers fail to provide reasonable accommodations to pregnant workers, their health and the health of their pregnancies can be jeopardized.

The federal Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 prohibits employers, employment agencies, and labor unions from discriminating on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions. This law also requires employers to provide unpaid leave for childbirth.

Connecticut law prohibits discrimination, as well. Under C.G.S. § 46a-60(a)(7), employers may not discharge a worker based upon her pregnancy. It contains additional protections that relate to a reasonable leave of absence, compensation to which the worker is entitled, the reinstatement of the worker to her original or equivalent position, and reasonable, temporary accommodations to a temporary suitable position.

Still, even with these laws, discrimination persists. During fiscal years 2011-2015, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reported nearly 31,000 cases of pregnancy discrimination filed with the agency.<sup>1</sup> Claims of discrimination persisted across every region, job sector, race

---

<sup>1</sup> National Partnership for Women & Families, "By the Numbers: Women Continue to Face Pregnancy Discrimination in the Workplace: An Analysis of U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Charges (Fiscal Years 2011-2015), Data Brief, October 2016.

and ethnicity. Black women, however, were disproportionately impacted by pregnancy discrimination.<sup>2</sup>

An area in the law for improvement is accommodations by employers. In the EEOC claims, pregnant workers reported being denied minor job modifications they needed to continue working while pregnant, including more frequent bathrooms breaks or carrying a water bottle.<sup>3</sup> These, among other accommodations are no cost or low cost, especially given that they are temporary in nature.

Employers that provide accommodations report benefits to their businesses. These benefits include improved recruitment and retention of employees, increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, increased employee commitment, improvements in workplace safety, and increased diversity.<sup>4</sup>

Workers should not have to choose between their health or the health of their pregnancy, and their livelihoods. We urge you to consider additional measures to protect the rights of pregnant women in the workplace, so that their economic security, and that of their family, is not placed into jeopardy. Thank you for your consideration.

---

<sup>2</sup> Id.

<sup>3</sup> Id.

<sup>4</sup> National Women's Law Center, "The Business Case for Accommodating Pregnant Workers," Fact Sheet, May 2015.